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Courses On Specialized Field In Undergraduate Programs Of Translation & Interpretation Departments In Turkey: The Importance Of Courses On Specialized Field In The Specialization Process Of Translator Candidates

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to reveal to what extent the structure of Translation Studies Undergraduate Programs in Turkey, whose numbers have been increasing in recent years contributes to specialization processes of translator candidates in the light of some cases. To this end, the structure of all the undergraduate programs teaching translation in Turkey is studied and a comparative research is conducted on whether courses on specialized fields are available in curricula, if available, are sufficient for specialization in a specific field. In the study, we first discuss expected qualities of translators and to what extent these are reflected for the translation teaching. The translator, as well as having a vast cultural and world knowledge, is required to be specialized at a specific field. The translation teaching primarily aims to create a translator profile equipped with such a world and specialized knowledge. In order to train translators with these skills, courses on different fields of specialization must be taken from relevant departments, which thus make translation teaching realistic and concrete. We observe that translation departments are insufficient in this respect and hence it is clear that graduate students face practical difficulties. The curricula followed by translation departments as to specialized courses vary from each other; as a result there is not a comprised model of a scientific translation teaching. A mutual method must therefore be sought. This study attempts to be the first step in this regard. To confront with universal dimension of a translation teaching, our study puts forward what kind of examinations related to different fields of specialization are designed to recruit translators by governmental institutions. With regard to this, the study also tries to show that course on specialized field has an important position in translation teaching by taking into account both its theoretical dimension and reflection on practice.

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1. Introduction

Translation departments aim at structuring their curricula in order to improve the qualifications required for a translator. As the definition of translating changes and as the perspectives on translation are developed, the curricula of translation departments change naturally as well. The qualifications expected from a translator become more different than in the past. As the innovations in the perspectives on the translator and translation process are reflected on the translation training, important changes occur on the structuring of courses in translation departments. Translation departments have been structured just like the departments of language education and linguistics because the structuring of translation departments in the first periods was based on the language departments and translation was reviewed from the perspective of linguistics in the past. Although quite important changes have occurred in the field of Translation Studies and translation has been reviewed from the perspective of Translation Studies rather than Linguistics, it is recognized that translation departments don't develop at the same rate and on the same level.

When we theoretically examine the qualifications that a translator must own, we can say that the basic requirement for being a translator is having a command of the text to be translated in terms of knowledge of topic, field, specialization and terminology. If we look at from this theoretical perspective, it is clear that "Courses on Specialized Fields" should be included in the curricula of translation departments more often and in a more qualified way. The most basic feature of translation is the reinforcement of the language skills of the translator. However, if we focus all the translation training on the improvement of this language skill and see the translation as a process for which only language is sufficient, we cannot comprehend the relation between translator and the text adequately. Having the knowledge of language and topic isn't enough for a professional translation. Therefore, having the knowledge of theory and methods and the ability to interpret and analyze the text are other basic qualifications that a translator should have.

Kautz (2000, p. 423) points out that the education structure of the departments which train professional translators at universities may vary according to the circumstances, learning traditions, cultural and social values of the countries in which they are located. He thinks that it may be wrong to suggest a unilateral model in professional translator training. According to Kautz, it will be more helpful to look for answers on-site to the questions about the structure of professional translator training.

Kautz, who has classified the translation training into 9 sub-branches as language education, cultural knowledge, profession knowledge, specialization knowledge, translation, interpretation, computer-assisted translation, terminology knowledge and Translation Studies, regards the teaching of courses on specialized fields as very significant. He states that firstly technical fields should be taught as specialized fields and they should be followed by fields such as economics and law. What is ideal for him is providing the knowledge of specialization and topic together. Besides, he underlines the significance of the fact that courses on specialized fields should be regarded as courses in which language plays a role rather than only as language courses (Kautz, 2000, p. 430-4).

Amman and Vermeer are other persons emphasizing the importance of specialized fields in translation training. The term "Specialized Field" is conventional and its power of expression may be inadequate. What should be understood from the concept of "specialized field" for translation programmes are the second and third minors. The ideal thing is firstly providing the translator candidates with the theoretical background required for translation training and then reinforcing the practical part of translation training with the courses on specialized fields. In this way, translator candidates will be closely acquainted with the cultural features, source and target jargons and terminologies of the specialized fields towards which they are oriented and will improve their abilities of research in that field. Although this kind of a model is still an exceptional condition in training, it may serve as an example to other departments as an interdisciplinary model surpassing the faculties (Amman & Vermeer, 1990, p. 52-3).

According to Amman and Vermeer, when specialized fields within the framework of translation action are in question, firstly text competence, namely the competence for text reception and production for the specialized field

should be acquired (Amman & Vermeer, 1990, p. 53). When courses on “Specialized Fields” are taken as minors, then there is the possibility to have a thorough education in the related field. Methods of working acquired during this education can be conveyed even to other fields in the future business life. A translator cannot know everything, but he/she should know how to acquire the information. According to Vermeer and Amman technical fields, law, economics and medicine can be esteemed as the appropriate specialized fields. Students should be able to select from the range of courses of specialization offered to them by their own will (Amman & Vermeer, 1990, p. 54).

Freihoff is another person referring to the significance of Courses on Specialized Fields in translation training. Freihoff orders the main points in translation training as below:

- A general translation training which is interdisciplinary in terms of theory should be provided.
- The bilingual training should focus both on the culture and language covering both languages.
- Courses on Specialized Fields should comply with the curriculum.
- The courses should focus on the text and its structure (Freihoff, 1993, p. 197).

2. Courses Oriented Towards Specialized Fields in Translation Departments of Universities

2.1. Courses on Specialized Fields in Translation Departments of Turkish Universities

We have conducted research on the position of courses on specialized fields in the curriculum of translation departments. In this research, we have taken 7 state and 7 private universities as examples. The data below were generated according to the information on the official web sites of the related departments. When we examine comparatively the distribution of courses on specialized fields within the curricula, the ensuing results are as below:

There are 8 “Courses on Specialized Fields” at Bogazici University, 5 at Istanbul University, 8 at Hacettepe University, 25 at Ege University, 6 at Mersin University, 4 at Yildiz Technical University and 8 “Courses on Specialized Fields” at Sakarya University.

Courses on specialized fields in translation departments of the abovementioned universities usually consist of fields of Economics, Business Administration, Law, Literature, European Union, International Relations and Politics. There are 6 state universities having “Courses on Specialized Fields” in the field of Literature in their translation departments, 4 state universities in the fields of Economics and Business Administration, 4 state universities in the field of European Union and 2 state universities have “Courses on Specialized Fields” in the field of Law in their translation departments. While 5 of these universities offer restricted options, the options offered by 2 of these universities are rather weak. While one university has an extensive coverage of social and natural sciences, but offers not so many options that are nevertheless above the average, another university offers options quite above the average and expectation, but there aren’t any courses in the field of natural sciences and all courses are in the field of social sciences. Another striking point is the fact that there is only one university offering “Medicine” as a course on a specialized field.

Courses on specialized fields in translation departments of the state universities range as department-faculty-university courses. While these courses are offered as department courses in many of the universities, in 3 universities they are offered as faculty courses or as elective courses of the university.

When we review translation departments in private universities, we see that there are 6 “Courses on Specialized Fields” at Cankaya University, 3 at Yeditepe University, 8 at Beykent University, 7 at Eastern Mediterranean University, 12 at Izmir University of Economics, 29 at Halic University and 16 courses at Okan University.

Courses on specialized fields at private universities usually include the fields of economics, law, literature, European Union, international relations and politics. Translation departments of 5 universities offer a course on specialized fields in the field of economics, 6 universities in the field of literature, 4 universities in the field of law, 4 universities in the field of European Union and translation departments of 4 universities offer a course on specialized fields in the field of international relations and politics. Whereas 4 of these universities don’t offer so many options, 2 of them offer average options and one of them is beyond expectations. Courses on specialized fields range as department-faculty-university courses. While these courses are dependent on the department in most of the

universities, they are offered as faculty or university courses at 2 of the universities.

If we look at from the perspective of theories, the course structuring of translation departments should be shaped in accordance with the data obtained from Translation Studies and its theories. However, it is observed that the divisions mentioned theoretically above and the qualifications required for a translator aren't taken into consideration in the structuring of the translation departments. When we examine the reasons why translation departments cannot be structured in compliance with the abilities of translators and with the theoretical structure envisaged by Translation Studies, the main reasons can be specified as below:

- The establishment of translation departments don't date back to older times,
- Translation Studies is a new scientific discipline,
- There are significant differences in the structuring of course schedules of the translation departments and
- Teaching staff working in translation departments don't originate from translation departments sufficiently.

It is pleasing that translation departments update their course schedules every year and are open to develop complying with the scientific and theoretical data. The fact that the relation, interaction and communication among translation departments have been increasing day by day plays an important role in the change of these departments from language departments into departments training translators.

The most important indication of the development of translation departments is the fact that courses on culture and specialized fields have been increasing day by day and have come to the fore in translation training. The importance attached to the courses on specialized fields by translation departments plays a significant role in the provision of a more appropriate translation practice and in the development of the relation between theory and practice. As translation departments increase the number of courses on specialized fields and pay attention to these courses, students can establish a better relationship with the translation practice.

2.2. The Position of Courses on Specialized Fields in the Translation Training Curricula in Germany

When we review the curricula of the translation and interpreting departments providing education on undergraduate and graduate level (in languages English, French, Italian, Russian, Spanish, Portuguese and Japanese) at Heidelberg University in Germany, we see that courses on specialized fields are divided into three modules. These modules consist of law, economics and medicine fields.

Students selecting the module of law take courses such as Introduction to Public Law, Introduction to Civil Law, European Law, International Law, German Law System and German Law Terminology and also take courses on specialized fields such as the law system and law terminology of the countries related to the language they study from the relevant faculty. In the module of economics, courses on specialized fields such as Introduction to Economics, Introduction to the Policy of Economics and History of Economics are selected from the related faculty. Students selecting the medicine module take the courses such as medicine terminology and being scientific in medicine from the related faculty.

When we look at translation and interpreting department of Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz in Germany, we see that courses on specialized fields each of which amount to 12 ECTS are offered in the fields of internet technology, medicine, law, technical fields and economics.

When we examine the courses on specialized fields in Germany, we see that they are structured in compliance with the characteristics envisaged by translation theory. Students have the opportunity to take courses in the main specialized fields from the related departments so that they can train themselves in the specialized field in which they will make translations just during the education before they make practice in translation. As the concept of "institute" in German education system is different from the one in Turkey, the curricula at German universities are composed of courses easily taken among faculties. The fact that social and natural sciences as a superstructure offer programmes open to all branches and it became a scientific convention that students can select courses from other departments as well as majors and minors, plays an important role in the establishment of courses on specialized fields. In Turkey, courses on specialized fields can be taken from other departments. However, only thanks to special efforts and exceptional situations, courses can be taken from other faculties and the courses of other

departments can be naturally found in the curriculum of another department. Especially translation departments not only take courses from specific departments, but they feel also the obligation to work with very different fields. Qualified expert translators can be trained in all areas only thanks to these programmes conducted together. As the courses on specialized fields increase in number and intensity, translation departments can reach a scientific structure suitable for translation practice.

3. Social and Official Perceptions about the Characteristics of Translators: Qualifications Required for Translators

Examining the qualifications required for translators both in Turkey and abroad we intend to see which qualifications should be found in translation programmes and which ones are found in translation programmes, but not known or taken into consideration by the translation market.

3.1. Examples and Comments of the Requirements for Translators in Turkey

When we examine the advertisements on the recruitment of contracted translators declared by Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 2009 and 2013, we see that applicants should be graduates of either translation, pedagogy, language and literature departments of the faculties teaching the related language or of the departments of international relations, public administration, politics, economics, finance and business administration offering education for 4 years and dependent on the faculties of Economics and Administrative Sciences and should take the minimum score in KPDS (Foreign Language Proficiency Examination for State Employees) in the related language in order to take part in the entrance exam (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2008-2013).

As it is seen from the abovementioned information, the most required qualification for translators in public institutions is having a command of the language. The fact that Ministry of Foreign Affairs refers to both translation and language departments in the recruitment of translators is an indication of this truth. The fact that graduates of language and literature and language pedagogy departments are regarded as translator candidates indicates that knowledge on a specialized field isn't important for translation. It is striking that there aren't any important qualifications required for translators except having knowledge of the language. It shows that courses on specialized fields offered during translation training aren't a distinctive feature at least for the governmental part of translation practice and also shows that public institutions of the state have fallen behind and not been able to adapt to translation education yet.

3.2. Requirements for Translators Abroad

Court interpreters in Austria are expected to be acquainted with the main principles of Austrian law and courts and the main principles of law and courts in the country of the official language from or into which they will interpret, to be competent on the terminology of law and economics in German and the other language as well as to have good knowledge of the source and target language in order to work as a court interpreter. Other than these, court interpreters are expected to have good knowledge of terminology in other specialized fields such as technical fields and medicine as well. Written expressions of court interpreters should be perfect in terms of grammar, syntax and dictation both in German and in the foreign language from which they interpret. As court interpreters are accepted as legal experts and stamp the documents they translate with their official seals, they are expected to own attention, clearness and accuracy on an extraordinary level (Austrian Association of Certified Court Interpreters, 2013).

The Austrian government requires the translators and interpreters mainly to have a good command of law and court jargon as well as the mother and foreign language and the characteristics and communication ability of the translators and interpreters are also emphasized. The qualifications required for a translator and interpreter are the ones of a professional translator and interpreter. What is in question is not a person who graduated from any of language departments or a person who has a good command of the language, but persons trained in the specialized fields and having good knowledge of courses on specialized fields. Naturally, translation and interpreting

departments have to graduate translators and interpreters appropriate for these circumstances.

According to the report published by the European Commission in 2009 in the forum on *Multilingualism and Interpreter Training*, an interpreter working in the legal field is supposed to be active in all fields where law takes place. For instance; in police investigations, in questioning at preliminary inquiries, at discussions between lawyer and client, at trials etc. It shouldn't be thought that a translator equipped with the necessary qualifications for judicial authorities and having good knowledge of both the source and target language can also interpret very well. Interpreters working in the legal field should own the necessary training and qualifications required for interpreting. They should serve to people bearing on any law system and not having knowledge of that language, and they should be aware of the responsibilities relating the job and know the arrangements in cooperation with other activities in other fields of law (Eulita, 2009).

As a result of this report, interpreters in the field of law should have the competences below in order to conduct their professions in the best way: Language proficiency, knowledge of the country, culture and law systems and interpreting skill (Eulita, 2009).

When we look at the qualifications required for translators in the official examination for translators in Germany, we can see that nearly the qualifications envisaged by Translation Studies and appropriate for the curriculum of a translation department are tested during the exam. Candidates should:

- Have a good command of the grammar, vocabulary, language properties, stylistics and dictation of both languages in which they will have the exam,
- Have a skill of written and oral expression,
- Have the ability to translate coherently the content and structure of the texts presented to themselves,
- Have the ability to foresee and prevent the possible misunderstandings and mistakes,
- Have enough knowledge of the political, economical and cultural structure and problems of the related language,
- Have knowledge of the assisting language and specialization tools (Staatliches Prüfungsamt für Übersetzer, 2013).

Candidates should prove that they have deep knowledge on a specialized field they selected themselves. They are expected to have a command of the basic information and scientific terminology of the selected specialized field. The valid specialized fields are mainly law, economics, technical fields, natural sciences, social sciences and humanities. They should keep in mind that they can apply for only one of these fields (Staatliches Prüfungsamt für Übersetzer, 2013).

4. Comparison of the Translator Profiles in Turkey and Europe Depending on the Required Qualifications in Terms of Parallelism with Translation Training

Just as there are differences in the position of courses on the specialized fields at universities, similar differences also occur in the required translator profile in terms of qualifications. It is observed that the view of a country on translation is similar with its view on translation market and official translators. We see that in our country, the fact that translation departments haven't been able to get rid of the influence of language education in terms of theoretical knowledge and courses on specialized fields is reflected on the qualifications required in the translator profile. Besides, we realize that while making a profile for translators, knowledge of the language is predominantly emphasized and knowing a language implies having a command of a foreign language and at this point, the contrast between translator and interpreter profile isn't considered at all.

However, we see that translator and interpreter profile in the West was shaped officially and unofficially in parallel with the translation theory and training. Translator and interpreter qualifications and conditions stated in advertisements and regulations in the West are in parallel with the ones stated by Translation Studies and translation theory. In this respect, we see how stable are the relations between theory-practice and between university-official and unofficial sectors. Qualifications required for translators in the West include important criteria setting a higher standard for the candidates and they contribute to the training and employment of qualified translators and also to the quality of translation. When we look at the criteria and advertisements in the West, we can see that the required

qualifications refer to expert translators not to the ones who graduated from language departments. Translator and interpreters are employed in accordance with the qualifications required in the graduates of translation departments. Apart from that, it is clearly observed that the qualifications of the graduates of language departments aren't suitable for translation.

The fact that graduation from a language department as well as translation department is regarded in the advertisements in Turkey and sometimes graduates of other departments who speak languages are also included indicates that translation theory hasn't been reflected on the practice yet.

5. Conclusion

Qualifications required for translators cannot be determined only taking the theoretical expressions into account. The qualifications required for translators in the market will lead to the fact that curricula of translation departments are checked again in terms of the competences of translators and these competences and qualifications are determined again in the market and official sectors in compliance with the scientific translator profile envisaged by Translation Studies and translation training. Translation theory and training should generate its own curriculum taking the demands of the market into consideration. In return, translation market should go beyond its conventional perceptions about translators and interact with the translation training and theory regarding the reasons from which deficiencies and the true qualifications of translators stem. In this respect, the relation between theory and practice indicates the relation between translation training, translation market and official translation organizations.

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